



# THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

30 – 31 December, 2005

30 Kislev, 5766

Parashat Miketz  
(Genesis 37:1–40:23)

Rabbi Michael Schwartz  
Cantorial Soloist Julie Howard

## D'var Torah by Rabbi Michael Schwartz

Shalom Chaverim,

My friend and colleague, Rabbi Paul Arberman who lives in Modi'in (where the revolt of the Maccabees started against those who tried to destroy Judaism) wrote these enlightening words:

The Talmud states (Shabbat 23b) that one who is consistent in lighting candles will have wise children, as it says "For the commandments are a lamp and the Torah is a light (Proverbs 6:23)."

The commentator Rashi points out that we aren't talking about lighting just any old candles, but about performing the mitzvah of lighting Shabbat and Chanukah candles.

Rabbi Leibel Lamm asks what is the connection between lighting Shabbat and Chanukah candles and raising successful, moral children?! He explains that a child who is raised in a warm family, a family full of light, will be able to see light in the world all around and in the eyes of others.

A story to illustrate:

A young lady who grew up in the desert went to the big city, Tel Aviv, for the first time in her life to visit her friend who lived there. They saw the whole city: Shenkin street, Carmel market, the beach boardwalk...at sundown, they found themselves in Dizengoff center, surrounded by crowds and speeding, honking cars and buses. Suddenly, the friend from the desert stopped and looked up into the sky. The city friend worried she was dizzy from the noise and bustle.

"I think I can hear the chirp of a beautiful yellow bird", said the first friend. Sure enough, they spotted a yellow bird on a balcony far above them. The city-girl was shocked: "How in the world did you manage to pick out that weak little birdcall amidst all this craziness and noise?!"

Instead of straining her voice to answer over the loud traffic, the desert friend took a shekel out of her pocket and dropped it on the sidewalk beside a line of people at a nearby bus-stop. Instantly, all heads turned and looked for the bouncing coin.

She explained: "That coin made no more noise than the bird chirping. These people have come to the city to acquire money, and so they hear even the faintest sound of a coin dropping. However, I grew up in the desert and am accustomed to listen to the sounds of birds chirping. Even now when I am in a foreign environment, I can hear the sound of a bird chirping even though it is very faint and threatened."

When a child sees the flames of the candles that burn in her home each Friday night and every night of Chanukah, it becomes a part of who she is and how she sees the world. Some people have the custom of lighting a Shabbat candle and a Chanukah menorah (a "*chanukia*") for each person in the home. The child thus learns that 'one of those flames represents ME!': "The candle of God is the soul of a person – *Ner HaShem nishmat adam.*" (Proverbs 20:27)

The same candle that illumines the home is the flame that motivates the child to spread light to others. When the child goes out into the world, which can be a dark and confusing place, she will see the light in the eyes of others even if the flash is small and the glow is weak.

That child will relate to every other human as a candle of God.

Shabbat shalom!  
Chag urim sameach – Have a happy Festival of *Lights!*

Rabbi Michael  
28 Kislev, 3<sup>rd</sup> candle of Chanukah, 5766

29<sup>th</sup> December, 2005